
TRADITION AND REFORM IN NOWADAYS INTERPRETING THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

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Abstract: During the latest commemoration of the Second Vatican Council, it was observed that Vatican II continues to be a reality very much active in the church today. The continuing being of Vatican II by reflecting upon the function of the sixteen documents that the Council produced and that include four Constitutions, nine Decrees, and three Declarations at past, present, and future. Reinterpretation of Vatican II, as a Renewal within Tradition, bring together contributors from a diversity of modern and present day social and religious schools of thought and perspectives. They are integrated by a communal commitment to Vatican II as a renewal within tradition, rather than as a break with earlier defined doctrine. Far from representing a monolithic view of what the Council was and how to carry it forward, however, our contributors exhibit quite an array of interests and at times different viewpoints with respect to the constructive mission of how best to receive the Council in the present day. As many reputed Catholic scholars write about each of the sixteen documents of the Council from the perspective of renewal within tradition, we followed the Pope Benedict XVI's difference between a "*hermeneutic of discontinuity*" and a "*hermeneutic of reform*." The previous hermeneutic envisions Church history and the Second Vatican Council in terms of doctrinal splits and reinventions, so that what the Church at present officially defines as included in divine revelation may tomorrow be cast out as wrong. If we compare, the latter hermeneutic involves the mission of transmitting the substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith in a manner that is pure and integral, without any attenuation or distortion but also in a way that corresponds to the needs of our time. This paper is committed to the latter hermeneutic, based on work of the new generation of Catholic scholars, so called the third generation after the Council, the students of the students of the great periti who helped to prepare the conciliar documents. The paper will proceed in four sections. First, will be discussed the relationship of tradition and reform in interpreting the Council, pointing especially to the writings of Joseph Ratzinger and Yves Congar both before and during the Council. Second, will be examine areas of concern with regard to post conciliar theological understandings of the Catholic church's Tradition. Will be noted that for a significant body of Catholic theologians, the Church no longer is able to proclaim and interpret the Gospel authoritatively for believers, and indeed the Gospel itself is stripped of its authoritative doctrinal and moral (cognitive) content, since Jesus appears simply as an archetype of liberative praxis. Third, will be reflected upon how best to interpret what happened at Vatican II and how the function of the Council should continue in our day. Focus will be the 1985 Extraordinary Synod work, whose focal point was Vatican II, and with some modern interpreters who move in directions different from our own. Finally, as a fourth, will be reflected upon our interest in Magisterial and theological reception of Vatican II, and we interact briefly with theologians who contributed to analogous reception, focused books especially during the end at the previous century.

Keywords: The Second Vatican Council, reinterpretation, renewal, tradition.

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, TRADITION, AND REFORM

The well known historian of The Second Vatican Council, Giuseppe Alberigo, in the section "Vatican II and Tradition", notes that in accord with the stated wishes of Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI, the Council understood itself in a traditional manner. Therefore, as he observes, "In dealing with the various subjects it faced," the Council aimed not to create doctrinal transformation, let alone a break with authoritative Church philosophy, but rather "devoted itself to developing formulations that were ever more faithful to revelation and more appropriate to the understanding of educated contemporaries."⁵⁵ This does not mean, certainly, that these innovative formulations concerned no modification.

In 1963, just after completed first session of the Council, Joseph Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI, as a representative of the *nouvelle theologie*, opened the question of the central issue. "Among the theological questions open to serious discussion were the relationship of scripture to tradition and the way in which faith is related to

⁵⁵ John O'Malley, SJ, *Introduction: Trajectories and Hermeneutics*, in *After Vatican II: Trajectories and Hermeneutics*, ed. James L. Heft, SM with John O'Malley, SJ, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012, x– xxii

history. Also under discussion was a proper understanding of inspiration and of the historicity of events narrated in scripture.”⁵⁶ Additionally to the papal reaction to the Modernist crisis of the beginning of XX century, Ratzinger states that beyond any particular “quarrel about theological differences,” there was a deeper issue: “The real question behind the discussion could be put this way: Was the intellectual position of ‘anti- Modernism’— the old policy of exclusiveness, condemnation and defense leading to an almost neurotic denial of all that was new— to be continued?”⁵⁷ Ratzinger’s generation of theologians wanted to make a brake of what Ratzinger calls cramped thinking, once so necessary as a line of defense and the old pattern of ‘*antiism*.’ They were eager to begin dispose of the defensive and really undertaking a Christian offensive.” This Christian “offensive” or new positive proclamation of the Gospel did not mean, for Ratzinger, giving in to the Modernist historicizing and relativizing of the Church’s dogmatic mediation of divine revelation. Quite the opposite, Ratzinger affirms that the Church must take all the needed precautions to guard the faith, even as the Church also comes to “turn over a new leaf and move on into a new and positive encounter with its own origins, with its brothers and with the world of today.” To escape misunderstanding, Ratzinger notes that “ecumenical must not mean concealing truth so as not to displease others.”⁵⁸ In contrast to manuals that promote the “anti- isms” through their lists of adversaries, the writings of the new scholars generation displayed how modern questions in the natural and human sciences, including history, politics, and the arts, could be enlightened by reference to the resources of the patristic, scholastic, renaissance, and later periods. What Ratzinger and his associates wished to affirm by means of their contributions to the documents of the Second Vatican Council was that to be a Catholic is not to become entangled in separatism, but to be open to the fullness of Christianity. These theologians had shifted from the manualist approach prevailing in numerous schools and seminaries to a *dialogic* approach of expression that require appreciatively to engage the questions of new times. As Ratzinger wrote in 1966, this dialogic mode should not be interpreted as a sudden switchover, a sudden shift from conservatism to progressivism in the Church. Since Catholic theology cannot be rightly interpreted in terms of modern materialist and mechanistic understandings of progress, true theological progress according to Ratzinger occurs precisely by means of a return/retrieval to the past, the privileged sources that bear divine revelation to us today and that faithfully communicate, therefore, the living and reigning Jesus Christ. Ratzinger explains that “the measure of the renewal is Christ, as scripture witnesses him. And if the renewal seeks to think through and to speak the Gospel of Christ in a way understandable to contemporary man— i.e., in a contemporary fashion (aggiornamento means bringing up to date), the objective is precisely that Christ may become understood.”⁵⁹ Back to history, there were view the Church had not faithfully mediated divine revelation during the four hundred years prior to Vatican II? In *La tradition et la vie de l’Eglise*, published during the Council as a summary of his two masterful volumes on Tradition and traditions, author Congar remarks that for the Fathers of the Church, “tradition presents first the content of the Scriptures, which contain in one way or another all that is necessary to live as God wishes us to (the details of which will be given later), and it interprets the meaning of the Scriptures.”⁶⁰ With the Church’s teaching authority in view, Congar insists that “the material book called ‘The Holy Bible’, which can be bought as such at any bookseller’s, is only the true Bread of Life for God’s People when it is interpreted correctly, according to the meaning implanted in it by God, and ... this is possible only in the Church, in and by her tradition.”⁶¹ When Congar wrote these words, he was a bold reformer but certainly not an advocate of rupture in defined doctrine: he affirms that the Holy Spirit is enough to ensure a certain continuity running through tradition and the Scriptures; we have seen that the Fathers, Schoolmen and Council of Trent have in fact proved the value of tradition in God’s economy for revealing himself and his plan by the action of the Holy Spirit. If we shed light on the way in which the Council, inspired not least by Congar, sought to renew and reform the Church so as to make the Gospel more present to the modern world, without producing doctrinal relativism or a rupture in defined doctrine. Alberigo states, “A comparison of the texts of the preparatory schemas with the documents finally accepted helps us measure the substantial continuity with Christian tradition as understood in Catholicism, but also the discontinuity with the Catholicism of the medieval Christian centuries and the post- Tridentine period.”⁶² This

⁵⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, trans. the Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle, New York: Paulist Press, 1966, 43.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 44.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 42-45.

⁵⁹ Ibid, viii. - ix.

⁶⁰ Yves Congar, OP, *The Meaning of Tradition*, trans. A. N. Woodrow, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004, 90.

⁶¹ Ibid, 96

⁶² Giuseppe Alberigo, “Vatican II and Tradition,” in *History of Vatican II*, vol. 5, Leuven: Peeters, 2006, 593.

“discontinuity” is not a denial of the fidelity of the post- Tridentine Church’s mediation of the Gospel. “No substantial novelties emerged, but an effort was made to restate the ancient faith in language intelligible to contemporary humanity and freed of the more or less parasitical encrustations that had hardened in place over the centuries.”⁶³

Congar made clear that what he was talking about was not a dogmatic error in the Church’s mediation of divine revelation, let alone a denial that divine revelation has identifiable, binding, and permanent cognitive content. He observes, “Some things in the church are unchangeable because they are of divine institution and they represent the very foundations upon which the church is built. Among these, for example, are dogma, the sacraments, and the essential structure of the church.”⁶⁴ In addition to these unchangeable realities, Congar adds further elements that should not be changed: “Other realities ... are so deeply linked to the essence of the church that they cannot be fundamentally changed; they demand our docility and our respect.”⁶⁵ Making his point even clearer, Alberigo emphasizes the centrality of Tradition for Dei Verbum and indeed the centrality of Dei Verbum for the unfolding of the whole Council. He appreciates that far from repudiating the Catholic Tradition, “the Council composed a constitution [Dei Verbum] that was devoted to tradition in the deepest meaning of the word: tradition is the transmission of Christian revelation itself. It is significant that Dei Verbum was one of its major and most telling documents, and the only one the composition of which lasted through the entire duration of the assembly, from 1962 to 1965.”⁶⁶

2. THE POST- CONCILIAR SITUATION AND TRADITION

As is well known, events moved quickly after the Council, more quickly than any of the theologians or bishops who participated in the Council could have anticipated. Congar’s response to the post- conciliar situation was one of surprise and even a certain amount of defensiveness. He observes in a hasty afterword to the 1968 edition of *True and False Reform in the Church*, “The council was not responsible for either the current problems or the new attitudes. It is unjust and even stupid to attribute to the council the difficulties that we are having today, or even the disquiet and pain about matters of faith.” His fundamental concern is a new attitude of protest, “a revolutionary climate” in which “things that yesterday appeared certain and solid suddenly seemed outdated or at least uninteresting.” For theology and for Western culture, he warns, “The danger of horizontalism is not a fantasy!” By “horizontalism” he means anthropocentrism, the focus on “the contemporary world and ... humanity’s role in the world,” a focus that conflicts with the Second Vatican Council’s insistence upon the primacy of Jesus Christ and the mysteries of divine life that the Gospel contains.⁶⁷ Congar sought to extend a dialog with the protesters, in order to work with them to develop solutions to their concerns. In fact, Congar was already worried about some kind of schism in the Church resulting from doctrinal dissent. Congar calls for “peace making,” for moderation in all things, for weighing all sides of difficult questions, and for “the full participation of everyone in those affairs and activities that concern everyone”— something that will require the clergy to be deeply “conscious of the lives, the ideas, the concerns, and the desires of the faithful” and that will require the Church “to create or multiply structures for participation.”⁶⁸

Fifty years after Vatican II, the aspects that Congar says that “theological dissent and critical communities not only need each other, but they are a necessary part of a living church.”⁶⁹ On this view, “since the Spirit’s authority calls the church to imitate the ‘vulnerable rule of God’ made flesh in Jesus, there is no room for ‘master- slave’ relationships within the church”; and it follows that “a democratic form is a better, even if imperfect, model for creating a church in which the Spirit’s impulse can be expressed by all Christians.”⁷⁰ Given this new view of the Church as simply an “anticipatory sign of the redeemed and just human community,” there inevitably are numerous defined doctrines and hierarchical forms that no longer truthfully mediate the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and Catholic

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Yves Congar, OP, *True and False Reform in the Church*, trans. Paul Philibert, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011, 298.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 150

⁶⁶ Giuseppe Alberigo, “Vatican II and Tradition,” in *History of Vatican II*, vol. 5, Leuven: Peeters, 2006, 594.

⁶⁷ Yves Congar, OP, *True and False Reform in the Church*, trans. Paul Philibert, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011, 341

⁶⁸ Ibid, 345– 46.

⁶⁹ Daniel Speed Thompson, *The Language of Dissent: Edward Schillebeeckx on the Crisis of Authority in the Catholic Church*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003, 157.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 160.

theologians are now encouraged and expected “to express and defend formulations of Christian experience that go against the received expressions for possible experience in the church contained in doctrine and magisterial teaching.”⁷¹ In fact, for a significant number of Catholic theologians, rupture with what Congar presented as the unchangeable givens is the fundamental purpose of theology, namely instantiating an egalitarian ecclesiastical form joined to an understanding of the Gospel as Jesus’s exemplary liberative praxis.

Terrence Tilley, sums up the new perspective on Catholic Tradition: “Crucial for identity through change is not remembering what the past said or did... . Our fidelity is constituted not by a ‘what’ but by ‘how.’ Our faithful memories are not preserved in practices frozen in the past but in living performances that warm our hearts and enlighten our minds.”⁷² Tilley’s viewpoint is reflected in some recent historiography of the Council’s origins. In an essay arguing that Henri de Lubac’s unconscious nostalgia for a mythic French past led ultimately to “the council fathers ... unwittingly set[ting] in motion an engine of nostalgia” through their promotion of patristic renewal, the patristics scholar Robin Darling Young issues a caution against our previous volume, *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition*.⁷³

Referring both to Pope Benedict XVI’s December 2005 address to the Curia, Young argues that “the historian can observe that more than one of *ressourcement*’s own architects came to regret the effects of the very council their work helped to stimulate, as in the development of recent Catholic theology and culture, patristic ‘inspiration’ was left far behind,” with the result that “some of *ressourcement*’s defenders were forced to take rearguard action and emphasize the ‘hermeneutic of continuity.’” It seems to us, however, that the documents of the Second Vatican Council themselves emphasize that the Church has faithfully, without rupture in defined doctrine, mediated divine revelation so that each generation has been able to encounter the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in Scripture as interpreted in the Church’s Tradition. Young’s portrait indicates the situation in some portions of the Catholic academy, where an insistence upon the fidelity and truth of the Church’s dogmatic transmission of the Gospel over the centuries is often presented as a nostalgic and conservative political stance rooted in something other than a radical and life-changing faith in Jesus Christ and the action of the Holy Spirit.

More nuanced, but still troubling, is Joseph Komonchak’s critique of Benedict XVI’s December 2005 address to the Curia. Komonchak states, “The Church, he [Benedict] claims, is a single historical subject, and its journey is one of continuous progress toward deeper understanding of the faith; it is not marked by fractures or breaks, or by leaps either.”⁷⁴ Komonchak challenges this claim on two grounds. First, he casts doubt on the view that the Church can be understood to be “a single historical subject” moving through time, since, after all, there are multiple “actual communities of believers who have constituted the Church in the past and constitute it today.” The question then is where the single Church could possibly exist, given that what we see on the ground are multiple particular churches. Surely, however, the answer is that due to the action of the Holy Spirit, the multiple churches found across time and space are the one “body of Christ. This spiritual unity in a hierarchically organized, sacramental Body of Christ is elaborated upon frequently in the documents of Vatican II, and indeed one wonders how the Church could even have an authoritative Council if such spiritual and institutional unity did not in fact exist across the generations, just as Benedict XVI— in accord with *Lumen Gentium* and other documents of the Council— says it does. Secondly, Komonchak challenges Benedict XVI’s claim on the grounds that Benedict disallows any “fractures or breaks” or “leaps.” In fact, however, what Benedict disallows is the notion that the Church has definitively taught error and thereby corrupted the divine revelation that the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, hands on and proclaims for the salvation of the world in each generation.

3. WHAT HAPPENED AT VATICAN II AND ITS RECEPTION TODAY

The question is “Did Anything Happen at Vatican II?” The answer will be a resounding yes, and we note that not only did something happen, but great things happened. The documents of Vatican II, brings many of these advances still need to be better received today, just as would be expected of an important Church Council after the passage of only fifty years. But, the reception of Vatican II must not be separated from receiving its full teaching on divine revelation and the Church, since the cost of such a mis- reception would be to turn the Catholic Church into a human construct that cannot mediate the salvation won by Jesus Christ. It is not possible to appeal to the authority of the

⁷¹ Ibid, 153– 54.

⁷² Terrence W. Tilley, *Inventing Catholic Tradition*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000, 185.

⁷³ Robin Darling Young, “A Soldier of the Great War: Henri de Lubac and the Patristic Sources for a Premodern Theology,” in Heft and O’Malley, *After Vatican II: Trajectories and Hermeneutics*, 134– 63, at 137.

⁷⁴ Joseph A. Komonchak, “Interpreting the Council and Its Consequences: Concluding Reflections,” in Heft and O’Malley, *After Vatican II: Trajectories and Hermeneutics*, 164– 72, at 167.

Second Vatican Council while proclaiming freedom from the authority of the doctrinal and moral teaching of the Church as contained in the Church's Magisterial Tradition. One finds a recent example of this problem in Massimo Faggioli's invocation of Pope Francis's authority (and the Council's) to rule out "the use of the triad abortion-contraception- homosexuality as a test for entering, staying in, or leaving the Church." Surely, however, *Gaudium et Spes* condemns abortion as illicit killing of an innocent human being, as do later (and earlier) Magisterial texts, and as Pope Francis has also done. Why, then, suppose that proper belonging to the Church can be decisively separated from what one believes about the licitness of abortion? Such a separation would surely count as an "ideologization of the Catholic tradition" (in Faggioli's words). For Faggioli, the fundamental post- conciliar problem with the Church has been St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI themselves. He states, "The bishops of Vatican II have been 'outvoiced,' especially in the last thirty years, by a theologically activist papacy."⁷⁵

In the ongoing reception of the Council, as John O'Malley observes, the study of each separate document should "pave the way for the further, absolutely essential step of considering the documents as constituting a single corpus and thus of showing how each document is in some measure an expression of larger orientations and part of an integral and coherent whole." O'Malley recognizes that the documents "implicitly but deliberately cross- reference and play off one another— in the vocabulary they employ, in the great themes to which they recur, in the core values they inculcate, and in certain basic issues that cut across them."⁷⁶ One sees this implicit cross- reference and coherence even by simply reading the opening paragraphs of the Constitutions. The Synod describes the Church's aim as a "civilization of love" whose primary agent is the Holy Spirit, who unites the Church and enables it to give thanks "to God the Father, through his Son."⁷⁷

The topics that the 1985 Synod's "Final Report" lists as particularly significant in the documents of Vatican II include the distinction between the secular and the sacred; the mystery of God through Jesus in the Holy Spirit; the mystery of the Church; the universal vocation to holiness; Scripture, Tradition, Magisterium; evangelization; the relationship between the Magisterium and theologians; renewal of the liturgy; the meaning of communion; unity and pluriformity in the Church; the Oriental Churches; collegiality; the episcopal conferences; participation and co-responsibility in the Church; ecumenical communion; the theology of the Cross; aggiornamento; inculturation; dialogue with non- Christian religions and non- believers; and the preferential option for the poor and human promotion. With regard to all these areas, the Synod aptly finds that "[t]he ecclesiology of communion is the central and fundamental idea of the Council's documents," specified as "communion with God through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit" through "the Word of God and ... the sacraments."⁷⁸ O'Malley's consideration of the documents note that the documents "are striking in that they express themselves in a style different from the legislative, judicial, and often punitive style employed by previous councils"; and he attributes this style to the *nouvelle theologie's* shift from a neo- scholastic mode of discourse to a discourse modeled on that of Scripture and the Fathers. Certainly, the documents have an inviting and dialogic style that differs from the terser and more combative style found in other councils. For O'Malley, Vatican II's style "conveyed a values shift that was also a system shift or a paradigm shift."⁷⁹

We hesitate nonetheless to invoke the phrases "system shift" or "paradigm shift," because these phrases might seem to imply that a new paradigm has replaced the old Christian paradigm— which surely was likewise centered upon the Gospel, upon communion in Christ rooted in obedient response to the word of God as mediated by the Church under the guidance of the Spirit. Furthermore, caustic denunciations remain part of the Church's repertoire when needed, as can be seen, for example, in Pope Francis's homiletic words of correction.

O'Malley consistently emphasizes that "to press continuity to the exclusion of any discontinuity is in effect to say that nothing happened. As applied to Vatican II, it reduces the council to a non- event."⁶⁷ In the sense of Congar's True and False Reform in the Church, which is the sense adopted by Benedict XVI, there is no doubt that the Second Vatican Council should be interpreted, as O'Malley says, through "the lens of reform," and we fully agree that the

⁷⁵ Massimo Faggioli, *A Council for the Global Church: Receiving Vatican II in History* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 94 and 322.

⁷⁶ John W. O'Malley, SJ, "'The Hermeneutic of Reform': A Historical Analysis," in *50 Years On: Probing the Riches of Vatican II*, ed. David G. Schultenover, SJ, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015, 3– 34, at 29

⁷⁷ *The Extraordinary Synod— 1985: Message to the People of God*, Boston, MA: Daughters of St. Paul, n.d.), 35– 36.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 53.

⁷⁹ John W. O'Malley, SJ, "'The Hermeneutic of Reform': A Historical Analysis," in *50 Years On: Probing the Riches of Vatican II*, ed. David G. Schultenover, SJ, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015, 3– 34, at 29 and 30

Council “was animated by a spirit of reform.”⁸⁰ But “reform” here does not mean fundamental revision of definitive doctrine so as to introduce a rupture in the Church’s faithful handing on of the truth of divine revelation, as the phrase “spirit of reform” has sometimes come to mean. Insofar as the Council’s true “spirit of reform” involves a greater effort to dialogue with outsiders, as Ormond Rush argues, it seems quite clear that this is indeed the case.⁸¹ The Council emphasized more than ever the universal call to holiness and the demands of the life of faith and charity.

4. AN EVALUATION OF RECEPTION AND AN EXERCISE IN RECEPTION

The Catholic Church must be “living”; this means reform and change, which Barth recognized and appreciated in the documents of Vatican II. The Catholic Church must also be proclaiming the true Gospel “of the living Jesus Christ,” and thus proclaiming the truth of history precisely within history. This can only be done if “history” is not a historicist solvent that dissolves all truth claims. Fifty years after the Council, the question has become whether “a radically temporal and historical conception of God and the people of God” can avoid becoming not only radically historical but historicist. Could be observed that ‘Mission to the world’ sums up adequately the purpose of Vatican II,” but “[d]efining the words ‘mission’ and ‘world’ was not an easy task for the Council— the past twenty years have seen the Church and theologians grappling with the same basic questions.”⁸² Still we have many question for future discuss, if there is a divinely given mission, does it involve the proclamation of the apostolic message of salvation to all generations, and is the Church authoritatively the bearer of that apostolic message, so that the Church is distinct even in the midst of a shared history from the “world” and its history? It is clear that theology cannot escape the need to reflect on the relationship between faith and history, and on the unity of the glorified Christ and Jesus of Nazareth. The Christian faith presumes a link of continuity between the phenomenon of Jesus and the interpretation of this phenomenon by the early Church. The credibility of the early Church’s (scriptural) interpretation of Jesus and of the creedal and conciliar interpretations offered in the course of the Church’s history (including at Vatican II) stands or falls upon the possibility of true historical communication and development of the cognitive content of the Gospel. The contribution to The Reception of Vatican II, a balanced interpretation of the Council’s documents should conclude notwithstanding some real shifts and developments, Vatican II is fundamentally self- consistent, stands in substantial continuity with earlier church teaching, and remains valid in its essentials for our own day.”⁸³ Insistence on the relationship of Vatican II to earlier Church teaching is not a present-day exhibition of restorationist tendencies or “anti-ism.” On the contrary, it belongs inherently to the joyful reception of Vatican II’s documents as truth about divine revelation. Of course, neither the Council nor any Church Synod should be simplistically described by a picture of a bland Synod in which peace reigned. Even today it is hard to imagine the bishops at Vatican II sitting around serenely agreeing with each other on everything, and so any kind of curent insistence upon the ongoing reception of the apostolic deposit of faith is not a ploy to disseminate an imaginary Vatican II that reprises the wondrous peace of the Church as described in Acts 2.

5. CONCLUSION

All that happened at Vatican II, and it significantly, positively, and tumultuously changed the Church. Given that Vatican II “was a beautiful work of the Holy Spirit,” as Pope Francis said in a homily on 17 April 2013,⁸⁴ the Church does not dare suppose either that it has yet done all that the Holy Spirit wished to be done through the Council’s Constitutions, Decrees, and Declarations, or that all that the Church has done has been done rightly. The task of the ongoing reception of the Council after fifty years, indeed, is not least to sift and evaluate what has been done thus far, so as to see better the true paths of development. As the 1985 Synod put it, Generally and joyfully we kind a verify that the Council is a legitimate and valid expression and interpretation of the deposit of faith as it is found in Sacred Scripture and in the living tradition of the Church. Therefore we are determined to progress further

⁸⁰ Ibid, 34.

⁸¹ Ormond Rush, “Toward a Comprehensive Interpretation of the Council and Its Documents,” in Schultenover, *50 Years On*, 35– 60; Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles* New York: Paulist Press, 2004.

⁸² Lucien Richard, OMI, “Vatican II and the Mission of the Church: A Contemporary Agenda,” in Richard, Harrington, and O’Malley, *Vatican II: The Unfinished Agenda: A Look to the Future*, 57– 70, at 68.

⁸³ Avery Dulles, SJ, “The Reception of Vatican II at the Extraordinary Synod of 1985,” appendix to *The Reception of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo, Jean- Pierre Jossua, and Joseph A. Komonchak, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell, Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1987 , 349– 63, at 350.

⁸⁴ See <http://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=17610>.

along the path indicated to us by the Council.⁸⁵ The two points go together: it is precisely because the Council leads us deeper into the deposit of faith as it is found in Sacred Scripture and in the living tradition of the Church, that we must boldly proceed along the true path of reform and renewal that the Council documents set forth.

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⁸⁵ The Extraordinary Synod— 1985: Message to the People of God, Boston, MA: Daughters of St. Paul, n.d., 38.